

# Kearney's taste of paradise 43 years and counting

By JAKE PUTNAM

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Palm Garden Lounge has been a staple of the Kearney bar scene since 1935. The familiar face of Monty Donahoo has greeted patrons for 43 years.

"The alumni come down and talk about their stories from when they were here," Donahoo said. "It's like 'Cheers.'"

Since 1979, Donahoo has seen generations of college students pass through UNK dating back to its time as Kearney State College. Palm Garden Lounge – or PGL as it's known by locals – offers a unique and personable experience.

The atmosphere channels a typical cash-only dive bar with a flair of island ambience. Patrons are met with a Jimmy Buffet tiki bar aesthetic mixing country with tropical. One could

mistake themselves for being in a lounge in Hawaii or the Caribbean if not for the chatter among guests of Husker football or grain prices.

UNK students are welcomed with blackberry brandy on their 21st birthday, for many likely their first sip of alcohol. Patrons are met with happy hour every day from 4-6 p.m. and karaoke on Thursday nights. Palm Garden boasts being the first bar to bring karaoke to the city starting the tradition 35 years ago.



CASSIE BROWN / ANTELOPE STAFF

Bar owner Monty Donahoo keeps old photos of himself at the bar to show guests.

"Palm Garden Lounge is my favorite because it's a little more family oriented," said Amanda McDonald, a Classic Karaoke staff member. "I feel like [Monty] treats you like one of his children. He's very interactive with you and cares to know what's going on in your life and he actually remembers the stuff."

"It's just a really relaxed environment and everybody here's so friendly," said



CASSIE BROWN / ANTELOPE STAFF

A bright neon sign lights up Palm Garden Lounge in downtown Kearney.

Morgan Millner, a karaoke night bargoer. "I think Monty's very welcoming; he always has a smile on his face. He'll help anybody out, and he'll serve you up with the best drinks."

Current and past students alike have found themselves striking up conversa-

tion with Monty Donahoo in this tree-themed pub.

"I love 'em all," Donahoo said. "They're good people, good kids and have very good manners here. I call them my boys and girls."

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